

**Agency: Department of Fish and Game****Project Title:**

# Cordova Area Skate Fishery Development

**State Funding Requested: \$ 50,000****House District: 5 - C**

One-Time Need

**Brief Project Description:**

Funding for necessary data collection and analysis for a developing fishery to be conducted in state waters in the Cordova area.

**Funding Plan:****Total Cost of Project: \$50,000**Funding Secured

Amount FY

Other Pending Requests

Amount FY

Anticipated Future Need

Amount FY

There is no other funding needed

**Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

This project will enable ADF&G to conduct an exploratory state-waters directed fishery for skates in the Cordova area. Local fishermen and processors have expressed interest in a new fishery that will increase opportunities for entry level local fishermen. The fishery would help the community by augmenting economic activity at times when the salmon fishery is closed. This new fishery will help by providing an opening that involves lower initial investment costs to fishermen.

In order to fulfill its statutory responsibilities for management, the Department of Fish & Game needs funding in order to collect data on stock distribution, abundance, size, sex and age data, and by-catch percentages. Without this critical data, the Board of Fish will not have adequate information to approve a full-scale directed fishery. The Commissioner of Fish and Game and the Director of the Division of Commercial Fisheries have indicated that the requested funding is the minimum amount that will enable them to complete the necessary work.

**Project Timeline:**

July 2008-June 2009

**Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:**

Division of Commercial Fisheries, Director John Hilsinger

**Grant Recipient Contact Information:**

Contact Name: John Hilsinger

Phone Number: 465-4210

Address: ADFG Headquarters

Email: john.hilsinger@alaska.gov

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? ☒ Yes ☐ No

# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

SARAH PALIN, GOVERNOR

P.O. BOX 115526  
JUNEAU, AK 99811-5526  
PHONE: (907) 465-4210  
FAX: (907) 465-2605

April 3, 2008

The Honorable Bill Thomas  
Chair, House Finance – Fish and Game Subcommittee  
House of Representatives  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Thomas,

This letter is in response to your request for ideas on developing a test fishery for skate in Prince William Sound. Many members of the public have expressed interest in harvesting skates, but many unanswered questions exist regarding the feasibility of the fishery, biological concerns for skates, and dealing with bycatch issues. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game currently has no funding to conduct the research and monitoring that would be necessary to explore the potential for such a fishery. Your proposal to provide \$50,000 to fund data collection would be a necessary first step to developing plans for such a test fishery and collecting necessary data to test the feasibility of a directed fishery. If such funding is made available, the department will work with interested user groups to develop plans that will allow adequate monitoring of the fishery and assessment of the issues associated with such a fishery. In the absence of such funding, this work will not be possible.

Sincerely,



John Hilsinger  
Director

# CITY OF CORDOVA

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March 3, 2008

Denby Lloyd, Commissioner  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
PO Box 115526  
1255 W 8<sup>th</sup> St.  
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Dear Commissioner Lloyd:

Several young fishermen have approached the city asking our support in developing a winter fishery for skate in the Cordova area. These fishermen, for the most part, are trying to enter into a fishing career, but do not have the capital to buy into some of the more traditional commercial fisheries in Alaska. Recent market interest by overseas buyers of skate that are found close to Alaska shores has opened a window of opportunity for these young fishermen if the State of Alaska finds it reasonable and biologically sound to conduct a directed fishery on skate during the winter months. A Commissioner's Permit in state waters for skate harvest is the suggested method to prosecute this fishery. A local cannery has expressed a willingness to purchase and process the skate harvested. It is recommended that the fishery occur in the winter months to reduce the amount of halibut by-catch and to provide employment opportunities for other local residents during this time period. A winter fishery also would not conflict with the existing summer salmon and halibut fisheries.

Skate have been harvested in this area in the past and are abundant in some local areas. A controlled fishery using a Commissioner's Permit would allow basic biological information to be collected on this species to determine the allowable harvest levels for a sustained yield fishery. The City of Cordova strongly supports the concept of a winter fishery for skate in the local area that is compatible with other fisheries and urges you to once again allow a directed fishery for this species during the winter months.

Respectfully,

Timothy L. Joyce, Mayor

TLJ:lk



**Cordova District Fishermen United**

PO Box 2436 | 509 First Street | Cordova, AK 99574

phone. (907) 424 3447 | fax. (907) 424 3430

web. [www.cdfu.org](http://www.cdfu.org) | email. [cdfu@ak.net](mailto:cdfu@ak.net)

April 2, 2008

Director John Hilsinger  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Division of Commercial Fisheries  
P.O. Box 115526  
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Dear Director Hilsinger,

Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU) supports the creation or re-establishment of winter or alternate fisheries in Prince William Sound. In response to requests from local fishermen we have written to the Cordova City Council in support of the issuance of a Commissioner's permit for the harvest of skate, provided that there are harvestable surpluses and that the harvest is compatible with existing fisheries.

CDFU urges the legislature to approve the \$50,000 request for an exploratory skate fishery in the Cordova area.

In concept, a directed skate fishery could be very beneficial to the local fishing industry. It could provide much needed jobs both for fishermen and processing plant workers, and increase economic activity in the community as a whole.

CDFU would like the Department of Fish and Game to conduct an exploratory fishery, and would like to ensure that accurate data is collected in this effort. In particular, by-catch of non-target species should be accurately measured so that a new fishery for skates does not conflict with existing fisheries. For this reason, it is important that this funding be approved, so that the Department has the necessary resources to properly monitor this exploratory fishery.

CDFU is committed to working with ADF&G, processors, and the City Council's Fisheries Advisory Committee on the development of sustainable fisheries for the benefit of the community of Cordova.

Sincerely,

Rochelle van den Broek  
Executive Director



P.O. Box 1511 • Cordova, Alaska 99574  
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Rep. Kevin Meyer, Co-Chairman  
House Finance Committee  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Copper River Seafoods strongly supports the request for \$50,000 for a developmental fishery for skates in the Cordova area. This funding will allow the Department of Fish & Game to perform the necessary research and data collection to make this fishery happen.

Skates are an ocean resource with great potential to be a valuable part of our seafood processing business. We have identified markets that are hungry for this resource and we are working with a group of local fishermen who are excited about the project. The only piece of the effort that is missing is the funding for Fish & Game. We respectfully ask for your support for this funding.

Best regards,

Bill Bailey  
Owner Operator  
Copper River Seafoods  
Cordova, Alaska